

DULUTH AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, July 16, 2007 - 5:00 p.m.
Room 402 - Fourth Floor, City Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Robert Powless, Donna Ennis, Warner Wirta, Tony LaDeaux, John Day, Ricky Defoe, Mike Sayers, Michele Gordon, Brian Wilson

EXCUSED ABSENT: Joy Dorscher, Beatrice Kitto

ABSENT: Brian Wilson

STAFF PRESENT: John Judd

OTHERS PRESENT: See sign-in sheet

CALL TO ORDER, APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND INTRODUCTIONS

Motion by Michele Gordon, seconded by Warner Wirta, to approve the agenda, with the addition of Gail Schoenfelder, Joan Peterson and Michelle Naar-Obed to Community Public Forum/Open Public Comment Period. The motion was unanimously approved.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 18, 2007 MEETING:

Motion by Dr. Powless, seconded by Ricky Defoe, to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2007 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

Review and recommendation of Northern Communities Land Trust (NCLT) application to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) for Urban Indian housing funds – Jim Mischler-Philbin, Associate Director of NCLT: The Land Trust has applied for and received grants in the past. Only restrictions are that funds must be used for purchasing homes in Duluth; available to Native Americans enrolled in a tribe. They are applying for four grants of \$25,000 each. This would be in addition to the funding already available to eligible families. Day asked when the grant monies would become available. Mischler-Philbin said the grants are usually approved by the end of October. Defoe asked why the grant amounts are lower this time than in the past and where the average income figure comes from. Mischler-Philbin said NCLT was advised to ask for less this year. Dr. Powless wrote a letter of support on behalf of the Indian Commission.

Motion by John Day, seconded by Donna Ennis, to approve the letter written by Dr. Powless in support of the NCLT application to MHFA. The motion was unanimously approved.

COMMUNITY PUBLIC FORUM / OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

Gail Schoenfeld and Joan Peterson from Protect Minnesota (a coalition of groups working toward preventing gun deaths and injuries) presented information on their group. They seek common ground with gun rights advocates. They are not against gun rights or hunting. Peterson distributed literature on gun safety. They are speaking to groups and influential individuals in government and law enforcement, hoping to get signatures on a resolution to educate households on gun safety and to help prevent illegal access to guns. Protect Minnesota will use the resolution to petition the Legislature to support requiring background checks before authorizing gun sales and purchases. Copies of the resolution will be distributed to all Commission members for further discussion at next month's meeting.

Michelle Naar-Obed, a representative of the Loaves and Fishes organization, spoke about the visit of the reproduction of Christopher Columbus' ship Nina to Duluth. The publicity and tours did not make any reference to the related policies of domination, exploitation and occupation that resulted in the genocide of Native peoples.

Motion made by John Day, seconded by Dr. Powless to add support to the letter drafted by Loaves and Fishes with the addition of a quote from Dee Brown's Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee. The motion was unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

Resolution to "Locate and Remove Barrels in Lake Superior" - Defoe questioned the wording "demand for immediate barrel removal" in the first "Whereas" when Greg Price supported sediment testing first at the last meeting and the fact that chromium was omitted from the list of toxicants in the second "Whereas" but included in the third "Whereas." He also wanted to verify Red Cliff's terms. Tabled until next meeting.

Report on the Indian Center / Housing Project - Sherry Sanchez Tibbetts, American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO) – Sanchez Tibbetts could not make it to the meeting; she sent apologies via Phoebe Smith-Ellis as well as the news that the \$319,000 in acquisition funds came through. The question remains whether the building should be purchased outright or used for a down payment followed by installments; also think about whether there should be a new building.

Gordon will contact Sanchez Tibbetts regarding putting in an application for the Community Housing Investment Fund.

Planning for DAIC Community Forum – August 23, Washington Center - Report from Sub-Committee (Ennis, Sayers & Gordon) – Still looking for donations for food. This much has been promised at this time: Dorscher will bring turkey; Sayers--fry bread; PATH—desserts; Gordon--chips and dip; Powless--paper products; other Commission members were encouraged to bring meats. About six craftspersons have indicated an interest in selling at the Forum. Several local politicians will have booths.

The Urban Indian Advisory Board will have a presence. Red Lake will send their Tribal Secretary and Treasurer. Cedar Creek Drum Group will perform. Judd distributed a draft of the press release; wants to know suggested changes and additions before the end of next week so he can send it out to the monthly Indian publications' deadlines.

Judd will be gone during August and will not be able to attend the next Commission meeting. Keith Hamre will take his place at the Forum.

Other Sub-Committee Reports - Day and Powless met with Chief Ramsey to tell him about the citizens' complaints regarding excessive police force at the last Commission meeting. Day reported that Ramsey was appreciative. He called the Hermantown Chief of Police regarding the Hermantown complaint. He also addressed the unsolved murders of Native Americans. He was reassuring that investigations are ongoing.

NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion of the Indian Child Welfare Act - Dr. Powless re-stated desire to write a short note to each judge in the area and send the three-page handout on ICWA frequently-asked questions. This would be a first step toward educating members of the courts. Day said that social worker Carol DeVerney has been developing educational material. UMD is doing a great job of educating social work students in ICWA, but they need further instruction on what they will need to know when they enter the field. DeVerney described some obstacles to ICWA enforcement: Indifferent tribes; lack of enrollment due to genealogy/blood quantum complications; county workers playing ignorance of or blatantly disregarding ICWA. Many attorneys are unfamiliar with ICWA as well.

DeVermeu informed the Commission that Chief Judge Floerke holds monthly Children's Justice Initiative meetings, and Day asked if Commission members would be allowed to attend.

LaDeaux suggested that Carol Driscoll be invited to speak at a future meeting. The October meeting was suggested and approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, UPCOMING EVENTS AND COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Dr. Powless recommended that all Commission members view the DVD of Greg Price and others on barrel-dumping in Lake Superior.

Day: There will be an Urban Indian Advisory Board meeting in September in the Twin Cities. 7/31 MN Indian Affairs Council meeting to discuss their composition.

Wirta: Attended the Veteran's powwow in Fond du Lac, a powerful and moving ceremony.

Judd: The commission to end homelessness in Duluth is looking for a DAIC representative to serve on their implementation team. Ennis volunteered.

Motion by Dr. Powless, seconded by John Day, to appoint Ennis to the Heading Home St. Louis County Implementation Team. The motion was unanimously approved.

LaDeaux: He is inspired by the words of his brother, who passed away earlier this year, to keep up his efforts with the Native American community.

Defoe: Spoke of commitments and priorities. He praised Dr. Powless and Sanchez-Tibbetts for their work on the DAIC.

Gordon was also moved by the Veteran's powwow and expressed appreciation at being part of the Commission.

NEXT MEETING/DATE/LOCATION:

August 20, 2007, Room 407 of City Hall.

ADJOURNMENT:

8:45 P.M.